

TRANSNATIONAL LITERATURE

'More than the Sum of its Parts': Popular Music, Gender, and Myth in Haruki Murakami's Fiction

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In the *Guardian* newspaper in 2007, Jon Wilde cites, amongst other novels, Douglas Copeland's *Eleanor Rigby*, Martin Amis's *Dead Babies*, and Bret Easton Ellis's *Less than Zero*, as examples of the fact that 'the history of books inspired by song titles is not exactly littered with gilt-edged triumphs'; that 'fiction inspired by songs ... has seldom worked to the advantage of either'.¹ Although Wilde, here, is primarily concerned with the coincidence of marketing potential (or lack of marketing potential) and quality of fiction when song titles are used in books, he also neatly sidesteps the question of the British author Nick Hornby's novels and essays; prime examples of the centrality of popular music to Hornby's work are the novels *About A Boy* (1995) and *Juliet, Naked* (2009), and the essay collections *31 Songs* (2003, published in the US as *Songbook*), and *The Polysyllabic Spree* (2004). More pertinently missing from Wilde's list, perhaps because the example so completely defies the thesis of Wilde's article, is Haruki Murakami. By 2007, the majority of Murakami's work to that date had been translated from Japanese into English, and the novels *Norwegian Wood* (published in Japanese in 1987, and in international English translation in 2000) whose title comes from the 1965 Beatles' song, and *Dance Dance Dance* (published in Japanese in 1988, and in English translation in 1994) whose title comes 1964 song by the Dells, had become international bestsellers.

It is not just the titles of these two novels by Murakami that reveal his deep indebtedness to popular music. Alongside references to and formal use of classical and jazz musical forms, authors such as George Orwell, and Thomas Mann, mentions of traditional Japanese cooking, spaghetti, and McDonalds fast food, pop music sits in the pantheon of high and low cultural references which provide Murakami's work with both popular appeal and, at times, complex intertexts. Because of the intertextual nature of his works, his lack of authorial prejudice about the sorts of allusions made, and the frequent provision, in his references to pieces of music, of the recording artists, date and even record label, Murakami's work has been criticised as no more than 'a sophisticated stylization of trivia', '[dabbling] in a blasé, offhand fashion' with 'real' literature, about which 'only a very few would be silly enough to get interested in deep reading'.² However, music, alongside these other cultural references, plays a major part in the complex structures and ideologies which are questioned in Murakami's novels, also influencing the rhythm, form and narrative in the works as well as the performative aspects of the characters in the stories themselves; Murakami states 'practically everything I know about writing ... I learned from music'.³ The widely intertextual nature of his work reinforces the boundary-crossing nature of the themes and contents of Murakami's work, the majority of which explore in some way the multiplicity of the self, and the nature of the unconscious, and frequently music

¹ Jon Wilde, 'Why Pop and Literature Don't Mix', *The Guardian Books Blog* (March 2007) accessed 2 June 2013. <www.guardian.co.uk/books/booksblog/2007/mar/22/whypopandliteraturedontmi>

² Masao Miyoshi, *Off Center: Power and Cultural Relations between Japan and the United States* (Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 1994) 235, 234.

³ Haruki Murakami, 'Jazz Messenger', trans Jay Rubin, *New York Times* (8 July 2007) accessed 1 June 2013. <www.nytimes.com/2007/07/08/books/review/Murakami-t.htm>

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words as a narrative device, presaging a moment of boundary crossing, an epiphany for the protagonist, or some sort of shift in plot.

Just as Murakami's works have been taken to task for their references to pop culture and their popular appeal, other critics have taken exception to what they see as a distinct gender bias in Murakami's work. Indeed, the novels and short stories do contain frequent descriptions of female appearances, and male monologues often concern questions of sex: Matthew Strecher addresses *Norwegian Wood* as an example of Murakami's 'female-centred' literature⁴ although this aspect of the novel has not delimited its popularity with male and female readers alike, and one female fan took Murakami to task for a satirical portrayal of feminists in *Kafka on the Shore*,⁵ to which Murakami apologetically replied, also pointing out the many different facets of human identity explored in *Kafka*. Part of the humour in the scene in *Kafka* which involves the 'cartoon-like one-dimensional feminists'⁶ is that it provokes a diatribe on gender and sex, and an important revelation on that subject-matter from Kafka's mentor, Oshima (gendered throughout the novel as 'he').

'How could any woman of generous spirit behave otherwise, given the torments that I face,' Oshima says.

The two women stand there as quiet as icebergs.

'... by the way, the term 'gender' was originally used to indicate grammatical gender. My feeling is that the word 'sex' is more accurate in indicating physical sexual difference. Using "gender" here is incorrect. To put a linguistic fine point on it.'

...

'First of all ... I'm a woman,' he says. '... My body is physically female, but my mind's completely male.' Oshima goes on. 'Emotionally I live as a man. ... And who knows if I'm a notorious sexist. But I'm not a lesbian, even though I dress this way. My sexual preference is for men. In other words, I'm a female, but I'm gay. I do anal sex, and have never used my vagina for sex. My clitoris is sensitive, but my breasts aren't. I don't have periods. So, what am I discriminating against? Could somebody enlighten me?''⁷

Needless to say, Murakami's gender-criticisms never really take root. Perhaps this is because of the generosity with which he treats his characters, allowing for even the most biased opinion to be deftly, often immediately, contrasted with a different one, as well as the close but unbiased attention that is paid in his work to the performative and fluid nature of literary, gender, and musical categories.

Ellen Koskoff writes that 'gender and musical identities intersect, intertwine, and inform one another', as 'women, men, gender, identity, music, culture, and so on, are not and have never

⁴ Matthew Strecher, 'Beyond "Pure" Literature: Mimesis, Formula, and the Postmodern in the Fiction of Murakami Haruki', *Journal of Asian Studies* 57.2 (1998) 366.

⁵ See Jay Rubin, *Haruki Murakami and the Music of Words* (London: Vintage, 2005) 293.

⁶ Rubin 292.

⁷ Haruki Murakami, *Kafka on the Shore*, trans. Philip Gabriel (London: Harvill, 2005) 191-2.

been fixed categories; each must be placed within its own unique and changeable context.’⁸ Mirroring this statement, Murakami states that, in his work, ‘No ground is solid ... Nothing is conclusive. It’s changeable. I always feel that everything is changeable in my fiction’.⁹ Jay Rubin notes that ‘for Murakami, music is the best means of entry into the deep recesses of the unconscious ... the core of the self ..., a fragmented narrative’,¹⁰ Lo Kwai-Cheung sees Murakami’s characters as ‘sexed and ethnic beings ... [whose] incompleteness of substance is actually the guarantee of their identity’,¹¹ Timothy Murphy notes the ‘decentered and equal-opportunities hybridization’¹² at play in Murakami, and Chiyoko Kawakami notes that Murakami’s works often investigate the dissolution and unsustainability of traditional social and cultural roles in contemporary Japan.¹³ Important elements in Murakami’s work are that cultural constructions are questioned, and musical and gender identities are blurred and changeable. It is these elements of his fiction that I will investigate in this essay.

Jay Rubin notes that Murakami’s frequent pop references provide narrative colouring but are usually not invested with ‘weighty symbolic significance’. However he also notes, ‘if Murakami’s frequent pop references represent anything, it is his entire generation’s rejection of their parents’ culture.’¹⁴ The culture that is rejected here is that of traditional nationalistic Japan, where hegemonic gender roles were reflected culturally in the prevalence of very strict generic styles of the literature and narrative address. The idea of *junbungaku* or ‘pure’ literature was the highest ideal and intertextuality was limited to references to canonical classical Japanese musical and literary styles. Murakami’s reaction to this was not only to write novels with international intertextual appeal, but also to write protagonists ‘in the first person ... [who are] neutral’ and who maintain this important neutrality by rejecting the trammels of ‘any kinship, any connection to a vertical family system’.¹⁵ One of the primary methods through which Murakami achieves this rejection of hierarchical social structures and establishes his idiosyncratic narrative style is through his use of a ‘boku’ narrator.

In contrast to most Western languages, in Japanese, pronouns are hardly ever used in basic sentence construction. However, the Japanese language (written and spoken) has a wide variety of first-person pronouns, all of which have some element of gender signification. The most commonly used of these pronouns in literature is ‘watashi’, a formal first-person pronoun which is usually perceived to be gender neutral (with feminine overtones). Murakami rarely employs

⁸ Ellen Koskoff, foreword to *Music and Gender*, ed. Pirkko Moisala and Beverley Diamond (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2000) x-xi.

⁹ Haruki Murakami, ‘In Dreams Begin Responsibility: an Interview with Haruki Murakami’, with John Ellis and Mitoko Hirabayashi, *The Georgia Review* 59.3 (2005) 558, 561.

¹⁰ Rubin 3.

¹¹ Kwai-Cheung Lo, ‘Return to what one imagines to be there: Masculinity and Racial Otherness in Haruki Murakami’s writings about China’ *NOVEL* 37.3 (2004) 258.

¹² Timothy S. Murphy, ‘To Have Done with Postmodernism: a Plea (or Provocation) for Globalization Studies’ *symplekè* 12.1/2 (2004) 26.

¹³ Chiyoko Kawakami, ‘The Unfinished Cartography: Murakami Haruki and the Postmodern Cognitive Map’ *Monumenta Nipponica* 57.3 (2002) 333.

¹⁴ Rubin 17.

¹⁵ Haruki Murakami, ‘The Art of Fiction, no. 182’, with John Wray, *The Paris Review* 170 (2002), accessed 3 June 2013. <www.theparisreview.org/interviews/2/the-art-of-fiction-no-182-haruki-murakami>

‘watashi’ in his writing (as we will see later, when he does so it denotes a firm difference in narrative level), innovatively using the first-person masculine informal or familiar pronoun, ‘boku’. Although Murakami’s use of ‘boku’ may seem to gender his writing, the effect is in fact the opposite. Where the novelists’ use of ‘watashi’ is culturally circumscribed in many ways by its use throughout the history of Japanese literature, in ‘boku’ Murakami found a pronoun through which he could carry out his investigations into the changeable nature of the self and psyche without any excess cultural baggage. Rather than being typically masculine, like the ‘watashi’ narrators of so many of Murakami’s peers, ‘boku’ is, as Margaret Hillenbrand points out, ‘male, but not in any sense that precludes intense female identification’.¹⁶ Hillenbrand goes on to write about the ‘metrosexual’ nature of Murakami’s ‘boku’: ‘straight but stylishly groomed, urban dwelling and urbane ... adept in the kitchen, *au fait* with every latest trend, in touch with his feelings and utterly at ease with his feminine side’.¹⁷

Often, in Murakami’s fiction, *boku* adopts a passive role, waiting for events to happen to him rather than seeking adventure (as with the protagonists of, for instance, *Dance Dance Dance* and *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*), eventually undergoing a sort of metaphysical bildungsroman of which sexual awakening is often a part. *Boku*, in his sensitivity and his rejection of stratified or hierarchical social roles, is often caught between the ‘real’ world (of action) and a spiritual world (of contemplation). It is frequently a female character who will either catalyse the *boku*-narrator’s movement between these worlds, or who will, in contrast to a different female character, represent one of the worlds and try and persuade *boku* to stay there, rather than oscillating between them. Contrasting Murakami’s fiction with other Japanese authors of contemporary male fantasy, Susan Joliffe Napier remarks that ‘[Murakami’s] women are remarkable for possessing their own independent personalities’.¹⁸ Just as music often catalyses a shift into a contemplative or remembering mode, or even a metaleptic shift in the narrative, the women in Murakami’s fiction, Napier notes, ‘are also clearly linked to an escape into another ... world’.¹⁹ Murakami responds similarly to an interviewer’s question about gender archetypes in his novels: ‘in my books and stories, women are mediums, in a sense; the function of the medium is to make something happen through herself. It’s a kind of system to be experienced. The protagonist is always led somewhere by the medium and the visions that he sees are shown to him by her.’²⁰

The masculine and feminine in Murakami often resonate with mythical rather than socially stratified gender roles, which, by dint of their mythic resonance eschew negatively ‘gendering’ categorisations. Indeed, the narrative of *Hard Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* is related to the Orpheus and Eurydice myth, and its Japanese counterpart, the story of Izanagi and

¹⁶ Margaret Hillenbrand, ‘Murakami Haruki in Greater China: Creative Responses and the Quest for Cosmopolitanism’, *Journal of Asian Studies* 68.3 (2009) 723.

¹⁷ Hillenbrand 723.

¹⁸ Susan Joliffe Napier, *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature: the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1996) 59.

¹⁹ Napier 59.

²⁰ Murakami, ‘The Art of Fiction.’

Izanami,²¹ and that of *Kafka on the Shore* in some ways mirrors the story of *Oedipus Rex*. The Kano sisters in *The Wind Up Bird Chronicle* work, in various ways, as mediums;²² Reiko, in *Norwegian Wood*, is described teasingly as ‘a regular Scheherazade’ (164); and *1Q84*’s literary investigation into the nature of sects and religious ideologies contains a balance of male and female figures which assume mythic proportions and operate across gender roles and cultural boundaries as well as, quite literally, across worlds: as ‘maza’ and ‘dohta’, ‘receiver’ and ‘perceiver’. Only *After Dark* avoids completely this question of gender, archetype, and point of view, as Murakami adopts the first-person plural pronoun, ‘watashi-tachi’, which gives a neutral video-camera-like point of view to the narrative.²³ More often than not, though, music and gender in Murakami operate as intertexts, as elements of the affective layering of the novels, as well as being catalysts of action.

‘Garota de Ipanema’ was originally a South American 1962 bossa nova song written by Antonio Carlos Jobim and Vinicius de Moraes and recorded by Pery Ribiero. Two years later, Astrud and Joao Gilberto were to record a version with Stan Getz using Normal Gimbel’s English lyrics. ‘The Girl from Ipanema’, on the 1964 Verve album *Getz/Gilberto*, became a runaway hit, winning the 1965 Record of the Year Grammy Award. Technically a jazz/bossa nova record, *Getz/Gilberto* (which won three further Grammys in 1965) and ‘The Girl from Ipanema’ ranked on popular music charts across the world, providing an example of a piece of music with cross-generic appeal. Jazz records including ‘The Girl from Ipanema’ appeared ‘among titles by the Beatles, Beach Boys, and Andy Williams’²⁴ – ‘proof that it is possible for music to be both artistically and commercially successful.’²⁵ The song has gone on to be one of the most recorded songs in musical history, defying genre and gender: recordings have been made by artists from Frank Sinatra to Dionne Warwick (for female vocalists a gender-reversed version ‘The Boy from Ipanema’, was soon created), and the song inspired a parody version by Stephen Sondheim (‘The Boy From...’, in *The Mad Show*), which deals with the female singer’s unrequited desire for a (blatantly homosexual, although she does not seem to know this) male.

An English translation of Haruki Murakami’s short story ‘The 1963/1982 Girl from Ipanema’ is as yet unpublished, but, built around a memory of the pop song, the story displays many of the ways in which music and gender operate in Murakami’s work. It is, as Jay Rubin writes, ‘vintage Murakami’.²⁶ The story of the song follows its opening lines, fitting in to the gender-roles prescribed by most melancholy pop lyrics: boy (or girl) sees girl (or boy) (‘tall and tan and young and lovely, the girl from Ipanema goes walking, and when she passes, each one she passes goes “aaah”’), longs for girl (or boy), who is unattainable and unnoticing. The song has a

²¹ See, for instance, Haruki Murakami ‘Interview’ with John Wesley Harding, *BOMB* 46 (1994), where the author states, ‘I was thinking of Orpheus when I was writing *Hard Boiled Wonderland*. That character went into the sewers, into an underground world. And he’s always listening to music ...’ (43).

²² See Haruki Murakami, *The Wind Up Bird Chronicle*. Trans. Jay Rubin. London: Vintage, 2003.

²³ The English translation in fact works towards replicating this neutrality in its narration through the use of the first person plural (see Haruki Murakami, *After Dark*. Trans. Jay Rubin. London: Vintage, 2008).

²⁴ Ashley Kahn, ‘The Impulse! Records Story: The House that Trane Built’, *Jazz Times* (September 2002), accessed 2 June 2013.

²⁵ Review of *Getz/Gilberto* (Verve, 1964) in *Jazz Times* (November 1994) 88.

²⁶ Rubin 12.

simple premise, simple lyrics, and a simple melody, but it is hauntingly effective in this simplicity, as proven by the high numbers of artists who have recorded it. As Murakami writes of Eric Clapton's album *Reptile*, 'The Girl from Ipanema' is 'not too brash or contrived. It has this steady rhythm and entirely natural melody', catalysing the mind to get 'quietly swept into the music'.²⁷ Murakami's story, too, has a simple premise: remembering the song, 'The Girl from Ipanema', the narrator is swept up in a series of remembrances, and shifts with ease from remembrance into a metaphysical realm.

The story opens with the opening lines of the song, as its narrator comments on the unaging nature of the girl in the song, and thus of the unchanged appeal of the song itself: 'This was how the girl from Ipanema looked at the sea back then, in 1963. And that's how she keeps looking at the sea now, in 1982. She hasn't aged. Sealed in her image, she drifts through an ocean of time ... in the song, she does not get old.'²⁸ This leads to further reminiscence, as the narrator recalls his school days (the school corridor, the food, a girl he knew then). From this 'real' reminiscence the story then shifts to a metaphysical level: the narrator tumbles into a fantasy scenario where, lying on a 'metaphysical' beach, he encounters the 'real' girl from Ipanema, and offers her a beer. He asks the girl from Ipanema if, on the hot beach, the soles of her feet get hot, and she jokes that since she is a metaphysical girl, she also has metaphysical soles, 'neither hot nor cold'. He confides in the girl that her presence, catalysed by remembrance of the song, catalyses also a remembrance of his schooling. To this, the 'completely metaphysical' girl from Ipanema laughs, reminding *boku* that 'the human essence lies in its complexity'. After this metaphysical stop-gap on the beach, the narrator closes the story dwelling on the affective connection between nostalgic musings, the girl from Ipanema, and looks forward to a time when his self is no longer complex or divided: 'I am myself and myself is me. Subject is object and object is subject. All gaps gone. A perfect union'. In this short story we see the use of the mythic gender roles common to Murakami's work blend with his use of popular music. For Murakami, 'we have a new kind of folklore, as a result of this internet world',²⁹ and this 'new kind of folklore', or international frame of reference, means that the Girl from Ipanema becomes a referent as timeless as Eurydice or Scheherazade: she is a pop archetype.

'The Girl from Ipanema' is also one of the 'few bossa novas'³⁰ played after some Bach fugues and various songs by the Beatles by Reiko to *Norwegian Wood*'s protagonist Toru, and his then-semi-girlfriend Naoko. This musical interlude in *Norwegian Wood* comes in the central section of the novel, where Toru, our *boku*-narrator, is led to question his gender role in society (Reiko and Naoko ask him how many women he has slept with, and if he has cared for them), and is asked either to commit to the contemplative world that Naoko represents (by not sleeping

²⁷ Haruki Murakami, *What I Talk About When I Talk About Running: a Memoir*, trans Philip Gabriel (London: Harvill Secker, 2008) 95.

²⁸ Part-translation given in Rubin, 9-12. For the sake of accessibility, since the short story is not published in English elsewhere, I have tried to give only quotations from Rubin's book in this essay.

²⁹ Murakami, 'The Art of Fiction.'

³⁰ Haruki Murakami, *Norwegian Wood*, trans. Jay Rubin (London: Vintage, 2003) 144. On page 164 of the Japanese version of the novel, 'The Girl from Ipanema' is mentioned directly (this specificity did not make the translation). Subsequent quotations from *Norwegian Wood* will be from the Vintage translation of the novel in parenthetical references, indicated by the abbreviation NW.

with any other women), or to leave. Leaving Naoko would involve Toru's commitment to Naoko's foil, in the 'real' world of the novel, Midori, and, as the novel progresses, it is clear that Toru is not yet able to make this decision, preferring instead to continue to listen to Reiko's music and her 'scheherazade-like' telling of her past history. Although Reiko's tale of her sexual awakening / rape and subsequent psychological torture by a 13-year old piano pupil, an 'absolute dyed-in-the-wool lesbian' (NW 203), provides a contrast to Naoko's story of her 'unusual' 'boy-girl relationship' (NW 168) with her childhood friend Kizuki, and it fascinates Toru, neither story provokes him to move away from his state of neutral indecision. The narrative continues in the vein that it has previously, Toru moving between Naoko and Midori, and musing slowly on his life, as Murakami subverts many of the narrative conventions and gender roles of the Japanese 'I'-novel³¹ and the popular formulaic romance.³²

Perhaps a part of Toru's prevarication in the central part of the novel is down to the novel's genesis. If 'popular music is the model for *Norwegian Wood*',³³ the most convincing single model for the novel comes not from the Beatles song 'Norwegian Wood (this bird has flown)', but from a different track on the genre-blending 1964 album *Rubber Soul*, 'Nowhere Man', which unlike 'Norwegian Wood' doesn't follow pop-music tradition in playing out the highly sexed melancholic address of unrequited boy to unnoticed girl, but is instead concerned with questions of action and inaction, and existential values. Toru could be seen as an archetypal 'nowhere man', who 'knows not where he's going', affected by everything and nothing. Murakami states, 'I love that song of the Beatles, "Nowhere Man". When I wrote the first part of *Norwegian Wood* originally I listened to "Nowhere Man". So I think there is some part of "Nowhere" in the last of the book. To me this is a nowhere place, nowhere city, nowhere street'.³⁴ The majority of the music mentioned in the novel is of a 'sentimental' ilk, leading Rubin to suggest that 'the tone of the entire book resembles nothing so much as a sweet, sad pop tune'.³⁵

The interrelation of the body and space takes on an important role in the way that gender and music operate in Murakami's fiction. The narrator of 'The Girl from Ipanema' is propelled by a song into two worlds: a world of sentimental reminiscence and a fantasy metaphysical realm; Toru from *Norwegian Wood* is propelled by 'a sweet orchestral cover of the Beatles' "Norwegian Wood" (NW 1) into the world of reminiscence which makes up the main body of the novel, where he is split between Naoko's contemplative world of the past and Midori's action-filled hyper-sexed present. This divide is explored further in one of Murakami's other early novels, *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* (Japanese publication 1985, English translation 1991). As the novel's title suggests, the narrative is split into two distinct, but interrelated sections 'Hardboiled Wonderland' and 'The End of the World', the stories of which are told in alternate chapters (a device Murakami employs to great effect in *1Q84*). As in many of Murakami's novels, the protagonist is unable to choose between different women who carry

³¹ See Rubin 152.

³² See Chieko Irie Mulhern, 'Japanese Harlequin Romances as Transcultural Woman's Fiction', *Journal of Asian Studies* 48.1 (1989): 50-70. Referred to in this context in Strecher, 'Beyond "Pure" Literature', 367.

³³ Rubin 154.

³⁴ Haruki Murakami, 'Interview' 43.

³⁵ Rubin 153.

with them different symbolic meanings, but in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, this is complicated further by the division of the novel, and the division between the narrative strands of the protagonist himself.

The *watashi*-narrator of the 'Hard Boiled Wonderland' chapters is mirrored in the 'End of the World' chapters by a *boku*-narrator. From the novel's opening, their lives and narratives seem linked, and soon in the book we discover that this linkage is an inextricable one: the *boku*-narrator and the world he inhabits is the unconscious manifestation of the *watashi*-narrator's self or, as the old man who created the system which enables this split calls it, his 'core-consciousness'.³⁶ To add a further layer to *watashi*'s doubling, on entering the town of 'The End of the World', the *boku*-narrator, or core-consciousness, is separated from his shadow, who represents his name, his cultural memory, and his identity. Just as *watashi* seeks, among other things, to reconcile his conscious and unconscious selves, *boku* seeks, among other things, to reconcile himself with his shadow. As the various quests that make up the strands of the novel concern identity, so too are they connected to questions of gender and of music. Both the *watashi* and *boku* narrators falls into many of the categories that Margaret Hillenbaum identifies with the metrosexual, however, it is *watashi* who has a wide-ranging taste in music, can cook, and pays attention to his appearance and to the clothing of others. As is Toru in *Norwegian Wood*, he is guided through and into many elements of his narrative journey by female figures, two in particular, the Librarian, a 'slender young woman with long black hair [and an] elegant backside' (HBW 73), and the old man's pink-clad granddaughter, 'young and beautiful and all that went with it, but chubby' (HBW 7).

With the granddaughter in pink, *watashi* takes on an apparently protective, almost avuncular, didactic role. But as it is her duty to guide him to her grandfather's underground laboratory, it is the girl in pink who really takes on the role of the guide and protector. Part-way through their acquaintance, the girl and *watashi* exchange remarks regarding her monochrome aesthetic choice of pink. Through this, the girl, although young and chubby, demonstrates a prosaic attitude to gender signifiers which is mirrored in her attitude towards everyday life:

"You seem to like pink," I said.

"Grandfather likes it. He says I look pretty in pink."

"You do," I said. And she did. (HBW 186-7).

Here, we meet a glancing reference to the Psychadelic Furs' 1981 song, 'Pretty in Pink', and, through this, the 1986 film Brat Pack film of the same name. When compared, these three variations on a theme of 'Pretty in Pink' provide very different pictures of femininity; the Psychadelic Furs song concerns a girl who mindlessly sleeps around, and the Brat Pack film is a High-School Cinderella story about a good girl from the wrong side of the tracks. In Murakami's case, the girl who is 'pretty in pink' wears the pink to please her grandfather, who upholds many of the traditional hierarchical values and standards of the older generation, but the gender role

³⁶Haruki Murakami, *Hard Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, trans. Alfred Birnbaum (London: Vintage, 2002) 62. Subsequent quotations from *Hard Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* will be from the Vintage translation of the novel in parenthetical references, indicated by the abbreviation *HBW*.

signified by her adoption of the colour has not affected her egalitarian attitude towards life. Because he is not sexually attracted to her, *watashi* manages to endure her naïve, personal, and sometimes embarrassing inquisitiveness about the sex drives and sexual relations of males and females, and also be guided by her through an underground labyrinth with no great feeling of emasculation.

Where the girl in pink helps *watashi* negotiate the topographical elements of his quest, the Librarian helps him with the metaphysical elements of his quest, also teaching him about the importance of developing a mental as well as physical relationship (the first time they sleep together he is unable to get an erection). This Librarian helps *watashi* investigate the enigma of the unicorn skull, which provides an object-link between the world of 'Hard Boiled Wonderland' and that of 'The End of the World'. As befits a character for whom *watashi* feels strong sexual attraction, this Librarian is written in a highly sexualised manner. In contrast to this, the female character with whom *boku* develops a connection in 'The End of the World', also a Librarian, is completely desexualised. An inhabitant of the city of the end of the world, she lives without a shadow, and thus without the trappings of sex, gender, memory, or even musical appreciation. As he loses himself in the end of the world situation, the *boku*-narrator, initially attracted to the Librarian, begins to understand the stripped-down being that existence without a shadow involves.

However, although the women work as plot changers in both narrative strands, they are not quite the Eurydice or Izanami figure that Murakami's analogy between the novel and these two myths seems to suggest. Rather, the Eurydice figure for *watashi* is *boku*, and for *boku* it is his shadow. Each level of this configuration of the self the novel investigates is incapable of independent existence, and as we move further into the core consciousness in 'The End of the World', important constituent parts of *watashi*'s self evidently do not exist in *boku*. Although *watashi* is less sensitive or emotionally intuitive than *boku*, it is only *watashi* who has taste in and memory of music. *Boku* enters the town of the end of the world with no memory of music or his past, but he still fills a male cultural role, although this is without intercourse, or use of a gender-specific first person pronoun in his narration. The shadow, too, is gradually ungendered, as the gatekeeper persistently refers to it as 'it' in spite of *boku*'s sensitively always gendering his shadow as 'him' (HBW 62).

As *watashi* dies at the end of the novel, he does so to the soundtrack of Bob Dylan's 'Hard Rain's Gonna Fall', remembering the various people he met in the course of his adventure. Conversely, as the shadow and *boku* part at the end of the novel, *boku* is surrounded by a perpetual present, thinking about the possibility of recouping some remembrance of the past things and recalled music through his (albeit sexless) relationship with the Librarian. He does not notice that this knowledge seems to rest with his shadow. In spite of his slow attempted manipulation of an accordion from the dusty recesses of the library, and his remembrance of the tune of 'Oh Danny Boy', as the novel closes 'All that is left to me is the sound of the snow underfoot' (HBW 399). Whereas *watashi* falls asleep dwelling on his past, *boku*, in spite of his lack of self-identification, has more hope for a future (although the bleak implication is that without his shadow, *boku* will be condemned to the cultureless life of the city's inhabitants). If you lose your connection with your unconscious and your memories, it seems Murakami is commenting, you relinquish your self and all of the facets from which it is made, and you lose your cultural identity – your gender role is obsolete, along with your need for music.

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